the mother is HBV infected). The second dose is administered a month or two later, and the third dose four or more months thereafter to obtain optimal antibody levels. The question of the need for a booster dose is not resolved, but protective levels of antibody are present for at least five years. The possible need for booster doses will be assessed as additional information becomes available.

Effective December 1, 1992, and January 1, 1993, respectively, California and Nevada Medicaid programs began paying the costs of childhood hepatitis B vaccination.

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Increased Surgical Options for Dysfunctional Uterine Bleeding

HYSTERECTOMY FOR DYSFUNCTIONAL uterine bleeding remains a common and expensive treatment. Because 50% of the uteruses removed for this reason are histologically normal, techniques are being developed to treat the target tissue, the endometrium, rather than remove the entire organ.

Endometrial ablation has been studied for more than 100 years, but technologic improvements in the past 10 to 15 years have now shown consistent results with low morbidity. First, instruments for endometrial aspiration done in the office have shown results equal to those of dilatation and curettage in the diagnosis of endometrial carcinoma. Second, hysteroscopy now permits direct visualization of the endometrium to ensure thorough ablation. Third, laser or electrosurgical devices provide effective and safe ablation.

The laser techniques cauterize the endometrium while the procedure is viewed through the hysteroscope. A review of the results of different studies over the past decade involving more than 1,000 patients showed an 88% to 97% success rate, with failure being defined as requiring a subsequent procedure or a hysterectomy. Electrosurgical equipment such as a urologic resectoscope (such as used for transurethral resection of the prostate) or a roller-ball electrode may also be used. Both use electrical current to cauterize the endometrium down to the basement membrane. Several studies, with results from hundreds of patients, reported success rates of 86% to 97.5%. The resectoscope also gathers tissue for histologic study and can be used to remove small submucosal fibroids.

Endometrial ablations can be done as outpatient procedures with shorter recovery times than for hysterectomies. As their availability increases throughout the country, primary care physicians will be able to offer patients procedures that are less uncomfortable, disruptive, and costly than a hysterectomy when medical therapy is unsuccessful.

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Changing Guidelines for Screening Mammography

BREAST CANCER is the most common cancer among women in the United States with each year about 175,000 new cases diagnosed and 44,000 deaths. Recommendations for screening mammography in asymptomatic women are made with the goal of reducing mortality through early detection and intervention.

Since 1980, the American Cancer Society (ACS) in conjunction with the National Cancer Institute has recommended yearly mammography for asymptomatic women older than 50 years. Controversy has surrounded recommendations for screening women from 40 to 49 years. Concerns have included a marginal cost-benefit ratio and lack of data to support decreased mortality among younger women when cancer is found by mammography. Supporters of annual screening in this age group point to the relative aggressiveness of cancer that occurs in younger women.

In 1983, based on data from the joint ACS/National Cancer Institute Breast Cancer Detection Demonstration Project and long-term follow-up from the Health Insurance Plan of New York study, the ACS guidelines were revised to include screening mammography every one to two years from 40 to 49 years of age. At that time, the ACS also recommended a baseline mammogram for future comparison for women between ages 35 and 39.

Guidelines were again revised by the ACS and published in August 1992 after a consensus meeting of 12 health care organizations was convened by the American College of Radiology to develop a uniform set of recommendations for breast cancer screening. The new guidelines reconfirm the use of screening mammograms on a yearly basis for women older than 50 and every one to two years for women from 40 to 49 years old.

Not all organizations have endorsed the recommendations for screening women younger than 50 years. The United States Preventive Services Task Force does not endorse routine mammography for women aged 40 to 49 unless they fall into a high-risk category based on family history. The recently published five-year follow-up